

Halt would impact large developments

Bill wants approvals stopped until new plan is adopted

By Dena Levitz
Examiner Staff Writer

The temporary moratorium on new subdivision construction in Montgomery County that was proposed earlier this week would stall more than 80 large-scale projects, including millions in dollars of planned improvements at Bethesda's mall, according to officials.

The affected projects break down to half a dozen county churches, 7,000 residential units and an unclear number of affordable housing units.

Under the suggested bill by newly appointed County Council President Marilyn Praisner, the planning board would have to stop considering approval of preliminary subdivi-

sion plans for about six months until a new growth policy is adopted for the county.

"What we're talking about is a temporary pause," said new Council Member Marc Elrich, who is on the side of limiting growth.

Planning Board Chairman Royce Hanson could not be reached for comment on the proposal Thursday.

But Karl Moritz, who represents the Montgomery County Parks and Planning department's research and technology center, said the proposal would halt about 5 million square feet of commercial development that is awaiting the board's approval. The exceptions to what supporters called a "minor pause" in development are subdivisions located entirely in a Metro station policy area and subdivisions that add five or fewer peak-hour trips to county roadways.

At present, the planning board has either in the pipelines or in planning stages the construction of



Construction workers toss bricks as they unload a pallet while working on one of the high-end single-family homes at Fairwood in Glenn Dale.
— Greg Whitsett/Examiner

31,000 residential units in the county and 30 million square feet of non-residential development.

A new growth policy is needed, Praisner said, to direct future development, which is increasing exponentially. Growth experts have said that Montgomery County is now adding a population the size of Rockville to its total citizenry every

four years.

This week, Prince William County went one step further than Montgomery in voting to defer the consideration of all residential rezoning applications for a year.

"We're really trying to slow things down," County spokeswoman Liz Bahrns said.

dlevitz@dcexaminer.com